

United States Senate

October 30, 2020

Col. Timothy R. Vail
Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District
P.O. Box 1229
Galveston, Texas 77553

Dear Col. Vail:

Over the past three years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps)—and in particular the Galveston District—has been a critical partner in the recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. As the work continues to strengthen and improve infrastructure to mitigate against future hurricane and flooding events, I respectfully request that you maximize the level of stakeholder engagement related to the Interim Feasibility Report for the Buffalo Bayou and Tributaries Resiliency Study (Interim Report) by extending the public comment period to December 31, 2020.

As you well know, Congress in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 provided funding to initiate and complete a feasibility study of the Buffalo Bayou and Tributaries flood risk management systems. I am encouraged by the Army Corps' progress on this study and the recent release of the Interim Report. The current public comment period for the Interim Report is scheduled to close on November 2, 2020. In order to ensure that there is full stakeholder engagement in what some have referred to as “one of the most important studies in Houston’s history,” it is necessary to extend the public comment period.

Many stakeholders and other members of the community have communicated to my office that 30 days is not sufficient time to fully and thoroughly review and comment on the Interim Report. As the Army Corps notes in the Interim Report, public input helps “inform decision-makers as they weigh the benefits and costs of alternatives or the individual measures that comprise an alternative.” Extending the public comment period by an additional 60 days would give local organizations and citizens the opportunity to coordinate and fully review the proposed alternatives and provide meaningful input.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the livelihoods of all Americans, and especially those that are still recovering from natural disasters. It also limited the level of typical stakeholder engagement for Army Corps' projects—most notably the elimination of in-person public meetings—and is a contributing factor that warrants an extension of the comment period.

I look forward to continue working with the Army Corps Galveston District and the Houston community on flood mitigation projects like the Buffalo Bayou and Tributaries study. With wide public input from stakeholders and residents I am confident that Army Corps will receive the

level of meaningful input necessary to make the feasibility report process successful and determine the most appropriate flood prevention alternative for the region.

Sincerely,



TED CRUZ
United States Senator